Greek Culture to 500 BC

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Pottery of Neolithic settlements in Greece has been found from as early as the 7th millennium BC. Gradually they went from herding sheep and goats to cattle and pigs and then to agriculture. Cutting tools made out of obsidian from the island of Melos were traded widely. The first metals used were copper and silver. In the early third millennium BC tin or arsenic was added to copper to make bronze, which revolutionized farming and fighting in Greece, the Cycladic islands, and on Crete.

Crete, Mycenae and Dorians

The civilization that developed and reached its climax about 1400 BC on the island of Crete in the Aegean Sea was named Minoan by Arthur Evans after their legendary god-king Minos. The islands of the Cyclades and the southern Greek mainland were influenced by this culture, but the largest cities were Knossos, Phaistos, Mallia, and Gournia on the central and eastern portions of Crete. Their graves were in caves, rock shelters, and large buildings. Pottery was hand-made, and seals were used from the middle of the third millennium. The fast potter's wheel quickly improved that industry, and vessels of gold and silver were used in their palaces, which were built from the beginning of the second millennium BC. The palaces indicate increased wealth and more concentrated political and religious authority. Trade went on not only with the mainland and the islands but with Syria and Egypt as well. Letters found in Mari on the Euphrates refer to the products of Cretan metalworkers. Inscriptions of Linear A have not yet been deciphered, but Linear B inscriptions dated after 1400 BC may be an early form of Greek also used on the mainland.

About 1700 BC the palaces at Knossos and Mallia were damaged, and the one at Phaistos was destroyed by fire. This could have been an invasion by Greeks or earthquakes or local turmoil. Evidence from this time indicates that there was at least one victim of human sacrifice. The rebuilding began the greatest period of Minoan architecture and art. The tremendous explosion of the volcano on the island of Thera, once thought to have occurred around 1500 BC, has recently been dated by tree rings as 1628 BC; so much ash fell from the sky that the annual tree ring was marked. Some have speculated that this caused the downfall of the Minoans and that this explains the legend of the destruction of Atlantis. Yet according to Plato's story from the Egyptians, that was 9,000 years before Solon, not 900, and it was in the Atlantic Ocean not in the Aegean. However, it certainly must have reminded people of the story of Atlantis, and psychics have indicated that Egyptian and Minoan cultures were influenced by the legacies of Atlantis.

Minos was renowned for controlling the Aegean Sea with his navy, and he was credited with reducing piracy. According to the research of Herodotus the Carians served in the navy of Minos and invented crested helmets and shields with devices and handles, while Thucydides wrote that Minos expelled the Carians from the islands when he was putting down piracy to secure revenues. The Minoans, whose palaces were not fortified, did not seem to be as violent as most cultures of the time, though they did have to defend themselves in this warlike age to maintain their extensive trade. However, they were probably overcome by the more aggressive Myceneans about 1400 BC.

Based on their art and architecture the Minoans seemed to love nature, art, music, dancing, sports, and games. One marble depicts a musician sitting with a stringed instrument. The women wore flounce dresses, aprons, and shoulder ribbons, but left the breasts exposed. Femininity was respected, and priestesses may have been quite powerful. Household statuettes of snake goddesses indicate a more feminine religion. The bull was also a main feature of their religion and culture, as they played sports or did acrobatics with bulls as well as sacrificing them on altars. Large central courts must have been used for dancing, and they played some kind of a board game. They wore their hair long, but the men usually shaved. The sea creatures on their pottery in the sixteenth century may have been stimulated by the species washed ashore with the tidal waves from the Thera disaster. The fresco paintings on the walls of the palaces and homes reveal a society that loved art. Their jewelry was elegant, and women wore makeup.

Unfortunately without much writing we know little of their real history, but Greek myths indicate that Minos met with the gods every ninth year, and his brother Rhadamanthus was so famous for justice that these two were considered the main judges of the dead in the next world. The ninth year or 99-month cycle may have been a ritual way of renewing the kingship so that the old king would not have to be replaced, as the Zeus they worshipped died and was reborn. The complex palace at Knossos was called the labyrinth, but the word originally meant the hall of the double ax, a sacred object used in ritual sacrifices. Like Mohenjo-daro the palaces were equipped with plumbing and closed drain pipes. The city of Gournia indicates that the standard of living had increased for many people.

Minoan civilization declined in the two or three centuries after the destruction about 1400 BC. Iron was manufactured in Asia Minor. New weapons and military gear found during this period indicate increased militarization probably under Mycenaean domination. The story of Theseus volunteering to join the tribute paid by Athens every nine years and his slaying the Minotaur with the help of Ariadne, the daughter of Minos, seems to be the Greek version of this conflict. According to Herodotus Minos was killed in Sicily, where he was trying to retrieve the legendary architect Daedalus, and the expedition to avenge his murder was devastated by a storm. The main palace at Knossos seems to have been taken over by the Mycenaeans, and it lasted about seventy years longer than those at Phaistos, Mallia, and Zakro. Settlements on Crete moved more inland, as trade became dangerous, and human figurines during this period have their hands up in a gesture of surrender or prayer. According to Homer, in the Trojan War Idomeneus led the Cretans from the island of ninety or a hundred cities. Influenced by the Minoan culture centered at Knossos, the Mycenaeans built similar palaces in southern Greece. Numerous weapons and fortifications indicate the warrior culture of the Mycenaeans.

According to Greek epics and legends, the wealthy city Thebes was cursed and devastated by a struggle for power between the two sons of Oedipus. Eteocles refused to share the throne, so Polyneices with his Theban emblem of a lion and Tydeus, whose emblem of Calydon was a boar, married the daughters of Adrastus, king of Argos and got his help for an attack on Thebes. Amphiaraus, who tried to talk them out of it, was persuaded to go along when his wife was bribed. Polyneices and Tydeus asked the Mycenaeans to join their alliance, but divine warnings led the Mycenaeans to refuse. Seven Argive heroes led attacks on the seven gates of Thebes, and after a bloody battle the two brothers fought a single combat, but each killed the other. About to be killed, legend had Amphiaraus taken alive into the underworld by Zeus at a place that became an oracle named after him. After Menoeceus sacrificed himself to the war god Aries, the Argives were defeated, and Adrastus retreated. However, the next generation of Argives came back with the aid of Theseus and the Athenians to drive the Thebans out and destroy the city so thoroughly that Thebes did not participate a generation later in the other famous war of this legendary age - the expedition against Troy.

Theseus, famous for liberating Athens from paying tribute to the Minoan empire, succeeded his father Aegeus as king of Athens and is credited by Thucydides with uniting several self-governing tribes of Attica into one political unit in an early federalist system. Theseus was known for many legendary exploits like those of Heracles. At age fifty he and his friend Pirithous carried off the child Helen, causing a Spartan alliance led by Castor and Pollux to attack Athens whose local leaders aroused by Menestheus against Theseus told the Spartans where they could find Helen and then banished Theseus.

Since there was little copper and no tin in Greece, trade was essential; Cypress was a main source of copper production. Greek swords were improved to cut as well as thrust; spears and shields were made smaller in the 13th century BC, while the Hittite and Egytpian empires were contending for power in Syria. By the end of the century the mysterious "sea peoples" were devastating the Egyptian delta, and the Hittite capital was destroyed too. At this time Phrygians were gaining power around Troy, and the Mycenaean cities were preparing for sieges by building connections to water supplies. This is also the estimated time of the Achaean war with Troy, which according to the ancient astronomer Eratosthenes ended in 1183 BC, though many scholars date it a little earlier. The abduction of the Spartan queen Helen could have been a factor, but more likely it was a raid for riches since Cyprus copper may have been cut off. Troy was devastated and never regained the power it once had held.

The decline of Mycenaean power followed soon after the fall of Troy. Thucydides explained that "the late return of the Hellenes from Ilium caused many revolutions," leading to exiled citizens founding cities. A defensive wall built across the isthmus implies they feared an attack from the north. According to tradition the Dorians, who came from the northwest led by those who claimed descent from Heracles, returned a century after their first attempt by crossing the Gulf of Corinth. Thucydides wrote that the Dorians mastered the Peloponnese eighty years after the fall of the Troy. Athens and eastern Greece were not as affected by the Dorian invasions that destroyed the great Mycenaean palaces in the 12th century bringing on a dark iron age. The wealth of the Minoans and Mycenaeans would not be matched again for half a millennium.

Ionian refugees from the Dorian invaders fled to Attica, to islands, and to the west coast of Asia. The Argolids were dominated but gradually through intermarriage with their conquerors became citizens, but the Laconian people were enslaved by Dorian masters. Eventually trade and the use of an alphabetic language was developed by the Phoenicians. Only in the eighth century BC did population begin to increase again with the development of better iron tools. Kingship had declined and was replaced by aristocratic nobles and large assemblies in city states.

Iliad

Stories, songs, and poems of the Bronze-age heroes and the Trojan War must have been passed on orally, for the first and greatest poet of ancient Greece, Homer, who probably lived during the 9th or 8th century BC in Ionian Asia Minor, composed two epic poems about Achilles during the last year of the war in the *Iliad* and the adventurous homeward journey of Odysseus in the *Odyssey*. Other poems were written about this great conflict; but not being as brilliant as the work of Homer, most of them were lost.

The *Iliad* begins in the tenth year of the Achaeans' attempt to conquer Troy to get back Helen, the wife of King Menelaus of Sparta who had run off with Paris, a prince of Troy. Captured Trojan women had been given to the Achaean leaders by their leader Agamemnon. The plot begins with the anger of the divine Apollo that his Trojan priest Chryses had been dishonored, because Agamemnon had taken his daughter. The priest asks that she be returned for the ransom, and the Achaeans shout their approval. Agamemnon though becomes angry and refuses to give her back. The old Chryses prays to Apollo over and over until the god brings a plague upon the Achaeans.

At a council Achilles suggests that they return home, since Apollo is angry at them; but Calchas tells them that Apollo is angry because Agamemnon is refusing to give back the girl for the ransom. Agamemnon is willing to give her back if she can be replaced. Achilles calls their leader "greediest for gain of all men,"1 indicating the likely motive for the war and suggests he get a future prize; but Agamemnon wants a new prize right away and threatens to take one from Achilles or Ajax or Odysseus. Achilles once again accuses Agamemnon of having a mind forever on profit and declares that he personally has not been offended by the Trojans and will therefore go home. Yet to prove that he is greater, Agamemnon announces his intention to take Briseis from Achilles, who is now angry enough to draw his sword; but Athena comes down to transmute his anger from violence to verbal abuse.

So Achilles withdraws from the war, hoping that the Achaeans will lose without him. Nestor tries to dissuade Agamemnon but fails as the powerful leader projects on Achilles the accusation that he wishes to be above all others and lord it over all. Achilles gives up the girl assigned to him by Agamemnon but refuses to obey his orders and will give up nothing else. Briseis is taken to Agamemnon, and Achilles asks his divine mother to intercede with Zeus to help the Trojans triumph during his absence from the fighting. Zeus sends an evil dream to Agamemnon deceiving him into thinking they can now defeat the Trojans, because Hera has gotten Olympian support for their cause.

Agamemnon calls a council of the princes and explains how Nestor came to him in a dream. The companies are aroused, and Zeus's messenger "Rumor walked blazingly among them."2 Then Agamemnon speaks of the nine long years of war that had accomplished nothing even though they outnumber the Trojans ten to one, and he suggests they run away with their ships. But Hera speaks to Athena and inspires Odysseus to encourage the men to fight on under one ruler. Then the ugly Thersites scolds them for their folly, accusing Agamemnon of greed and of dishonoring Achilles; they should go home. Odysseus abusing the old man strikes him on the back with a scepter. Odysseus then reminds them of Calchas' prophecy that they would defeat Troy in the tenth year; they should stay until each man has lain in bed with a Trojan wife. Agamemnon should order the men by tribes to see which leaders are bad.

Then the Trojans attacked the organized Achaeans, and Paris challenges the best of the Argives to a single combat which is accepted by Menelaus. So the men, whose conflict over Helen caused the war, fight to decide who should have Helen and her possessions. After lambs are sacrificed between the armies, Menelaus wounds Paris and is dragging him away when Aphrodite intervenes and spirits him away to the bedroom he shares with Helen. With the disappearance of Paris Agamemnon declares that Menelaus won and Helen should be given back. Hera and Athena arrange it so that the Trojans are the first offenders against the oaths, as Pandarus treacherously wounds Menelaus with an arrow.

The brutal fighting goes on with many deaths on both sides. Aries goes down to stir the ranks of the Trojans when they need help, but Hera sends Athena to help the Achaeans and stop "the murderous work of manslaughtering Aries."3 The paradox of this heroic fighting is described by Homer when Hector and Ajax fight in heart-consuming hate and then join in friendship before parting. In a Trojan assembly Antenor tries to persuade his companions in arms to give back Helen and her possessions, but Paris would only agree to give back her possessions, not the woman. However, on the other side Diomedes, the son of Tydeus who fought at Thebes, proudly suggests they refuse to accept the possessions of Paris.

Then Zeus commands that the gods no longer interfere with the fighting, though Athena plans to continue giving advice to the Argives. The earthly conflict is also mirrored in the Olympian quarreling between Zeus and his consort Hera whom he calls shameless. As the advancing Trojans camp by fires outside their city walls, Agamemnon suggests to the Achaeans once again that they take their ships home; but Diomedes declares that he will fight on and is acclaimed by shouts. Agamemnon now worried offers to give Briseis back to Achilles along with seven women from Lesbos. The old tutor of Achilles, Phoenix, is sent along with Odysseus, Ajax, and others to persuade Achilles to rejoin the battle, but Achilles declares that he will not until Hector has fought his way to their ships.

At night Odysseus and Diomedes venture forth and capture a Trojan spy, whom they question before cutting off his head. Then they capture Thracian horses as Diomedes kills twelve sleeping Thracians. As Dawn rose, "Zeus sent down in speed to the fast ships of the Achaeans the wearisome goddess of Hate."4 In the battle when Agamemnon overcomes the two sons of Antimachus, they plead to live and offer him wealth; but the Achaean leader hates their father, who took the gold of Paris to oppose the return of Helen and had even suggested that Menelaus be murdered when he came as an envoy; so Agamemnon slays the two sons. With the Trojans

winning, the god Poseidon goes to help the Achaeans until his brother Zeus forbids him; but Hera distracts her divine husband Zeus with lovemaking and sleep so that Poseidon can aid the Danaans. Hector with his fighting skill has led the Trojans to the Achaean ships, but then he is wounded by Ajax with a boulder. Yet the divine Apollo revives and encourages him to return to battle.

Finally Patroclus comes to plead with Achilles, who describes his friend in an example of Homer's fine metaphors:

> Why then are you crying like some poor little girl, Patroclus,
> who runs after her mother and begs to be picked up and carried,
> and clings to her dress, and holds her back when she tries to hurry,
> and gazes tearfully into her face, until she is picked up?5

Achilles offers his armor to Patroclus and urges him to lead the Myrmidons and defend the ships from the Trojan attack. Achilles' prayer to Zeus that this be successful and Patroclus may return safely results in the first being granted and the second denied, as Patroclus is killed by Hector. Hector manages to strip the armor from the body of Patroclus, and then a long fight ensues between the Trojans and Achaeans over the corpse. Finally the two Ajaxes fight off Hector and Aeneas as the Achaeans carry it off.

In assembly Poulydamas argues that the Trojans should retreat to fight from behind their walls, but the bolder advice of Hector to maintain the offensive in spite of Achilles' return is followed. Since Achilles gave his armor to Patroclus, his mother Thetis goes to the gods and returns with Olympian armor made by Hephaestus. After a sacrifice and feast at which Agamemnon gives back Briseis to Achilles along with other gifts, Achilles, who fasts till sunset in mourning for his friend, is ready to fight.

Zeus now allows the gods and goddesses to go down and help either side. Aeneas fights Achilles but is rescued from death by Poseidon. Achilles drives so many Trojans into a river that the spirit of the river almost drowns Achilles in revenge; but Poseidon and Athena rescue him. Hephaestus burns the corpses but is restrained from injuring the divine river by Hera. Yet in Homer even the gods are not exempt from the violent fighting as Athena hits Aries in the neck with a stone and Aphrodite on her breasts with her hand. Finally Achilles confronts Hector and chases him around the walls of Troy three times before the Trojan hero stands to fight and is killed by Achilles. Removing his armor Achilles drags the corpse from the back of his chariot.

A pause in the fighting is filled by the funeral ceremonies for Patroclus and numerous competitions sponsored by Achilles, who awards prizes to the winners. The gods send Thetis to ask her son to allow Priam to ransom the body of his dead son, and Achilles allows the Trojan king to come to his tent and retrieve the body of Hector during the night, concluding the great war epic that became the most respected literary work of this competitive and violent culture.

Odyssey

The *Odyssey* begins nearly ten years after the defeat of Troy at Ithaca, where Penelope, the wife of Odysseus, is besieged by numerous suitors for her hand who are taking advantage of her

hospitality. Athena in disguise visits Penelope's son by Odysseus, Telemachus, whom she advises to visit Nestor and Menelaus in search of news about his father and suggests also, "Consider in your heart and in your mind how you may slaughter the suitors in your halls, either by cunning or openly."6 This violent ambition Homer called putting strength and courage in him. So young Telemachus calls an assembly of the Achaeans to complain that the suitors are assailing his mother against her will, but Antinous replies that Penelope has been putting the suitors off for nearly four years until she finishes weaving a robe, but every night she unravels what she did that day. Telemachus tells the suitors to leave and find their dinners in each others' homes. Then he visits Sparta and Pylos to learn about his father.

After visiting Nestor, Telemachus is welcomed by Menelaus, who is living comfortably once again with his wife Helen. Menelaus recounts his own adventures returning from Troy and tells of an old man from the sea who informed him that Odysseus is stranded on an island with the divine nymph Calypso without a ship or any other companion. Meanwhile Antinous asks for a ship and twenty men to ambush Telemachus between Samos and Ithaca. Odysseus is crying for a way to get home, and Calypso finally suggests that he build a raft and gives him supplies. Poseidon, the great antagonist of Odysseus, causes a storm that destroys the raft. Odysseus drifts for three days until he is able to swim into a friendly river on an island. The next day Odysseus meets the fair maiden Nausicaa when she is doing her washing and playing ball with her companions. Naked and covering himself with a branch he shyly speaks to her from a distance. She invites him to her father's home but recommends that he pass him by and kneel at the knees of her mother in his petition for help in getting home, indicating the power of the woman in this case.

Odysseus is welcomed into the great house of Alcinous and Arete, whom he tells how he spent seven years on the island with Calypso because his ship was crushed by a thunderbolt from Zeus. As the blind bard Demodocus recites stories of a quarrel between Odysseus and Achilles and the stratagem of the wooden horse at Troy, Odysseus tries to hide his tears. They are also entertained by the story of the love affair between Aries and Aphrodite, the wife of Hephaestus. Then after demonstrating his athletic prowess with the discus Odysseus tells them who he is and gives an account of his adventures since the Trojan war. First he and his men sacked the city of Ismaros, killed its men, and took their wives and goods, which they divided equally. The Cicones fought back and killed six men from each of his ships. Then they visited the land of the lotus-eaters where his men who ate the flowery food no longer wanted to return.

On the island of the Cyclops, Odysseus and his men first stole his lambs and cheese, but their leader wanted to go back to meet the one-eyed giant and receive the gifts of a guest. However, the Cyclops ate two of his men for each meal after he had blocked the door with a huge boulder until Odysseus and four others made a log into a pointed weapon and put out the eye of the drunk Polyphemus. When asked his name, Odysseus said that he is called Nobody so that when Polyphemus asked for help because Nobody was murdering him by craft, his friends ignored him. Removing the boulder to let out his lambs, Odysseus and his men sneaked out tied to the fleeces of the furry creatures. Odysseus proclaimed that the gods had paid back Polyphemus for eating his guests; but as they were escaping, the Cyclops prayed that his father Poseidon would prevent Odysseus from getting home.

After losing a wind that had been given him when his men become suspicious of their leader, only Odysseus and the men on his ship escaped from the Aeolian island. Next half of the men were turned into pigs by the magic of Circe; but Hermes gave Odysseus another drug which blocked her magic and told him to pull his sword on her and make her vow not to injure them further before going to bed with her, and Odysseus made sure that his men had been transformed back into humans. Odysseus asked to go home; but the goddess told him that he would have to visit the soul of the prophet Teirisias in the realm of the dead in the halls of Hades and Persephone. As they were leaving, one of his men fell off a ladder and broke his neck; dying, his soul went down to Hades.

In the underworld of the afterlife Odysseus first met the soul of his companion, who had died in the fall. Then he met his mother and Teirisias, who warned him to leave the sheep of the Sun unmolested. Odysseus also saw many other souls of the dead including the judge Minos. After returning, Odysseus was warned by Circe how to meet challenges he would face. When passing the sirens he commanded his men to tie him to the mast of the ship and not release him no matter how much he pleaded. Then he put wax in their ears so they would not be influenced by the sounds of the sirens. Carefully he had to steer between Scylla and Charybdis. However, Eurylochus led the men to take sheep from the Sun, and they were killed when Zeus threw a thunderbolt at their ship. Only Odysseus survived, and nine days later he came upon the island of Calypso.

Having heard his story the Phaeacians generously take Odysseus to Ithaca, and he finds his way to the home of his old swineherd. There Athena disguises him as an old man in rags. The swineherd Eumaeus is still loyal to Odysseus but is skeptical of the old man's story that Odysseus is on his way home. Next Telemachus returns to Ithaca too by way of Pylos and is guided to the swineherd's dwelling. The swineherd goes to tell Penelope to send the housekeeper. Using a golden wand Athena restores the youth of Odysseus, and he reveals himself to his son Telemachus. They plot against the suitors together, and he tells Telemachus to put away the weapons when he nods to him. At the same time the suitors are considering the murder of Telemachus, but Anphinomus advises them to consult the gods first. Penelope hears of the plot and tells the suitors it is not holy to plot ills. Once Odysseus had restrained them, but she accuses them, "Now you devour his home without payment and woo his wife and kill off his son, and you anger me very much."7 Before the swineherd returns, Athena uses the wand again to turn Odysseus back into the old man.

Odysseus enters the halls of his house as an old beggar. Telemachus and Eumaeus encourage him to beg for food, because shame is not good for a needy man. Antinous refuses to share with the beggar and after a quarrel hits him with a stool; but he is reprimanded by one of the other suitors.

> Antinous, you did not do well to hit a hapless wanderer.
> You are cursed, if perchance he is some heavenly god.
> Yes, the gods in the semblance of alien strangers
> do appear in all forms and go about among cities
> looking upon the excess and the good order of men.8

Penelope tells Eumaeus she wants to ask the beggar about news of her husband Odysseus. After dinner another beggar would not allow the disguised Odysseus to sit in the doorway, but he is beaten by Odysseus after the suitors encourage them to fight. Penelope suggests to the suitors that she might marry if she is offered enough presents. One of the maids, who has been sleeping with the suitor Eurymachus, scolds Odysseus after he tells the maids to stay with Penelope; Eurymachus throws a stool at Odysseus, but he dodges it.

Odysseus tells Telemachus that they must put aside the weapons of war and beguile the suitors with deception, and Telemachus orders them put away. Still in disguise Odysseus tells Penelope a story in which he claims he is a friend of Odysseus. His nurse Eurycleia, who is helping Odysseus to bathe, notices a scar near his knee and realizes that he is Odysseus; but Athena distracts Penelope, and Odysseus keeps the nurse quiet. She volunteers to tell her master which serving women have been faithful and which have not, but Odysseus declares that he will be able to observe them himself. That night Odysseus plots in his heart how to revenge himself on the suitors.

The next day another suitor throws an ox's foot at the begging Odysseus, but then Penelope inspired by Athena promises marriage to the one who can string the bow of Odysseus and shoot an arrow through twelve axes. Odysseus asks his swineherd and oxherd who they would fight for if Odysseus returns, and finding them loyal he reveals himself to them. After Telemachus and all the suitors fail to string the bow, Odysseus does so and shoots an arrow through all the axes. When there is no thought of slaughter in the heart of Antinous, Odysseus shoots an arrow through his neck. Thinking it was an accident, the other suitors say he will not be allowed to attend other contests and that he will be destroyed for killing the greatest young man in Ithaca.

Hearing that he is Odysseus returned, Eurymachus offers to give him satisfaction in land and goods for all that the suitors have taken, but Odysseus replies that no amount of goods would stop him from slaughtering them. So Eurymachus attacks him with a sword and is killed by an arrow. Telemachus goes to get weapons for himself and the two loyal servants while Odysseus slays more suitors; but the goatherd Melanthius gets some weapons for the suitors. The suitors continue to be slaughtered by Odysseus and his son, and only the singer Phemius and the herald Medon, who beg for mercy, are spared. Then Odysseus asks his nurse Eurycleia which of the fifty maids dishonored him and which are innocent, and she tells him that twelve were shameless. After making these women clear away the dead bodies and clean up the mess, Odysseus hangs them in a painful death.

Admitting to Telemachus that they had killed the best youth of Ithaca, Odysseus suggests they cover up the murders by making it seem like it was a wedding celebration. Then he reveals himself to Penelope and tells her his story. Finally he goes to visit his father Laertes; first he tests him, but then he is recognized by his father. Odysseus is also reunited with his servant Dolius and his family. Meanwhile relatives of the dead suitors are plotting revenge. Zeus suggests that Odysseus be allowed to reign and that oblivion for the murders occur so that they may love one another as before and live in wealth and peace. But the families of Odysseus and Dolius put on their armor to fight the approaching adversaries. Athena gives Laertes the strength to kill their leader Eupeithes. Odysseus and Telemachus would have destroyed them all according to Homer had not Athena in the guise of Mentor intervened and called off the war by getting both sides to

take an oath. This abrupt ending by divine intervention of a situation of dismal human conflict will also be seen in Greek theater.

The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* by Homer are astonishing works of poetry and are not only the first great works of narrative literature (with the exception of the *Epic of Gilgamesh)* but are still among the greatest works ever written. Yet the violence of this early period and the glorification of war and killing leaves much to be desired ethically. This primitive tendency to make acts of killing other human beings heroic and to build a story with such killing as the climax is still too present in contemporary dramas. The interaction between the gods and goddesses and humans in Homer and the depiction of souls after death both indicate a spiritual awareness of souls, but he also projected human weaknesses on to divine characters. Unfortunately in Homer the ethics of the gods and goddesses is not much better than that of the humans.

Hesiod and Homeric Hymns

Not long after Homer in the 8th century BC Hesiod lived as a farmer, but inspired by the Muses as he was tending sheep he became a poet and won a tripod at funeral games in Euboea. Legendary accounts of his death tell how Delphi warned him that death would overtake him in the fair grove of Nemean Zeus. Hesiod avoided Nemea near Corinth but retired in Locris, which turns out to have been sacred to Nemean Zeus. There he was murdered by two men who accused him of seducing their sister. His body was thrown into the sea but was said to have been returned to shore by dolphins.

In the *Theogony* Hesiod described the birth of the gods and goddesses. Similar to cosmogonies of the near east and Egypt, the universe was formed from Chaos as the foundation of the Earth and the cosmic principle of Love (Eros). From Night came the Ether and Day, while the Earth bore Heaven (Uranus) and from Heaven the Ocean and divine beings of assorted shapes and sizes, some of whom were hated and hidden by their father Heaven. Not liking this, Earth made a sickle her son Cronos used to cut off the genitals of Uranus which were thrown into the sea and gave birth to Aphrodite, the goddess of sexual love. She was accompanied by Eros and desire. From Night came doom, fate, and death, from whom came sleep and dreams. Night also produced blame, woe, the three destinies, nemesis, deceit, friendship, age, and strife. From strife came toil, forgetfulness, famine, sorrows, fighting, battles, murders, manslaughters, quarrels, lying, disputes, lawlessness and ruin (which are the same for Hesiod), and oath.

Having learned from Heaven and Earth that his son would overthrow him, Cronos ate his children as they were born - Hestia, Demeter, Hera, Hades, and Poseidon; but Zeus was saved by his mother Rhea at Crete. Given a stone in swaddling clothes, Cronos swallowed it and then regurgitated all the others. Zeus freed his bound brothers and sisters, and these Olympians then defeated the Titans in a battle of the gods that established Zeus as king. These violent stories seem to reflect more of a projection of human conflict than a divine model for better human behavior.

In the *Works and Days* Hesiod criticized his brother for taking more than his share of their inheritance and exhorted him to a life of hard work, virtue, and justice. Hesiod recognized the will of Zeus as making some strong and bringing the strong low, humbling the proud, raising the

obscure, and straightening the crooked. He distinguished the beneficial striving of competition from the violent strife of evil war and battle. The former urges people to work, plow, plant, and put their houses in order to obtain wealth. Potters, craftsmen, minstrels, and even beggars compete with each other. Thus he encouraged his brother Perses to strive in this useful way. Zeus hid fire from humans, but Prometheus stole it and gave it to them. In revenge Zeus had Hephaestus fashion a woman endowed with everything (Pandora) and sent an urn full of plagues as a gift to Epimetheus, who thought about things after they occurred in contrast to his brother Prometheus, who thought before. Pandora opened the jar and out came all the plagues and finally hope. These diseases demonstrate, according to Hesiod, that there is no way to escape the will of Zeus.

Hesiod then told how humanity degenerated from a golden age, when people lived on a fruitful earth under the rule of Cronos to the silver age, when they began to accumulate wealth and wrong each other to the bronze age, when hard-hearted men loved violence and using bronze implements and weapons destroyed each other. Then Zeus created a fourth race of heroes and demi-gods, and some of them were destroyed in the battles at Thebes and Troy. Yet others lived apart and working the grain-giving earth flourished. The fifth generation is an age of iron when people never rest from labor and sorrow by day and from perishing at night. Hesiod foresaw a dismal time when parents would not agree with their children, guests with their hosts nor comrades with each other. People will dishonor their parents and not repay them for their upbringing, for might shall be their right. The honest, just and good will not be favored, but the evil-doers and violent will be praised. Strength will replace reverence, and the wicked will hurt and lie about the worthy.

Nevertheless Hesiod urged his brother not to foster violence but rather justice, because justice defeats outrage by the end of the race. The fool only learns this by suffering. When people give straight judgments to strangers, their city flourishes, and the people prosper, resulting in peace. But those who practice violence are punished by Zeus, who sees and understands all. Zeus has ordained that fish and beasts and birds devour one another, not knowing right; but humans are given right which proves by far the best. Whoever knows right is given prosperity by Zeus; but whoever deliberately lies hurts justice and faces a dark future. The road to vice is easy and shallow, but it takes hard work to climb the long and steep path to virtue which is rough at first; but when one reaches the top, it becomes easy.

Wealth should not be seized by force nor stolen by deception, for it will not last since the gods will bring that house down. Similarly wronging suppliants or guests, committing adultery, offending fatherless children, abusing a father with harsh words all make Zeus angry and will bring heavy requitals. Hesiod suggested calling one's friend to a feast while leaving one's enemy alone, giving to those who give but not to those who don't. Giving is good, but taking freezes the heart. Add to what you have so that you will always have enough, but base gain is as bad as ruin. He advised getting a witness to a wage agreement, for trust and mistrust can bring ruin. Then Hesiod presented a long discourse on the best times of the year to do agricultural tasks. Hesiod also advised people to speak sparingly, for people will speak badly of those who speak evil. Hesiod recommended integrity and warned against letting one's face put one's heart to shame. He concluded that happiness and fortune will come to those who know these things and do their work without offending the immortal gods by avoiding transgression. The ethics of Hesiod is

summarized in a saying of Rhadamanthus from his works, "If one sows evil, one will reap evil increase; if they do to him as he has done, it will be true justice."9

Hymns to Demeter, Apollo, Hermes, Aphrodite, and other gods and goddesses were called Homeric, but scholars believe they were written well after the time of Homer and Hesiod. The hymn to Demeter gives the myth behind the mysteries of Eleusis that were so important in Greek religion. When Persephone is carried off into the underworld by its god Hades, her mother Demeter (which means "barley mother") searches for her while fasting, causing a famine on the earth. At Eleusis she takes a job as a nurse to a child she nearly makes immortal by putting him in the fire each night until his mother stops her. Then the Eleusinians build a temple to Demeter and pray that she end the famine. Finally Zeus sends for her, and Demeter insists that her daughter be released. Persephone is filled with joy; but before she leaves Hades she eats some pomegranate seeds, and thus she has to return there a third part of every year just as seeds are buried but return to life. The land becomes fertile and wealthy once more. For centuries people came from all over Greece to fast and be initiated at Eleusis into the mother-daughter mysteries that explained to them the secrets of agriculture and spiritual rebirth.

Apollo is the son of Zeus by Leto, and a temple is built for the oracular god at Delos. Resenting that Zeus gave birth to Athena from his head, his sister and wife Hera leaves his bed for a year and gives birth to cruel Tryphaon to be a plague to humans. However, Apollo with his bow shoots and kills the snake-like monster at a place called Pythian which became the famous oracle used by generations of Greeks to seek the divine will. In the form of a dolphin Apollo also guided Cretans from Knossos to his temple, where he urged them to follow justice in their hearts.

Hermes is born to Zeus by the reclusive Maia in a cave, becomes a thief by night, and plays the lyre in the day time, for he made a musical instrument out of a tortoise shell. Hermes steals the cattle of Apollo and is scolded by his mother. Apollo discovers from an old man who witnessed the theft that Hermes has taken his cattle. Hermes retreats into his cradle and responds to Apollo's accusations with crafty words. Apollo carries Hermes off, and they go to Mount Olympus, where the gods are assembled. Hermes swears to their father that he did not drive the cows to his house. Zeus asks Hermes to lead them to the cattle, which he does. Apollo is about to bind up Hermes; but the youngster begins to play the lyre, and Apollo is so enchanted that they become friends. Hermes gives him the lyre and offers to teach him music, and in return Apollo makes him keeper of the herd. Hermes promises not to steal from Apollo and is commissioned by Zeus to establish barter among people.

Only the goddesses Athena, Artemis, and Hestia are not moved by the powers of Aphrodite. Even Zeus is swayed by love and desire; he causes Aphrodite to join in love with the mortal man Anchises, and she gives birth to the Trojan hero Aeneas. The father Anchises must never say that the boy's mother is a goddess, or he will be struck down by Zeus. Formerly Aphrodite could mate the immortals with mortal women; but now that she has conceived a child with a mortal man, she can no longer have this power among the gods.

Aristocrats, Tyrants, and Poets

Phoenicians founded a colony at Carthage in the late 9th century BC, and the Greeks began colonizing Italy and Sicily in the middle of the eighth century. Cumae was founded by its namesake Aeolians and reconciled pioneers from Chalcis and Eretria, who had fought each other with a convention that did not allow long-range weapons. According to Livy, Eretrian colonization of the island of Corfu preceded movement to Cumae. Named after bronze, Chalcis was active in the metal trade which stimulated these efforts. With the increase of wealth economic inequalities led many land-hungry Greeks (now first named that by the Latins) to settle in the west. According to Thucydides, Chalcidians led by Theocles founded Naxos. The next year Corinthians established Syracuse, and five years after that Theocles and the Chalcidians drove out the Sicels by force of arms to found Leontini and later Catana. When Corinthians drove the Eretrians from Corfu, they went back to Eretria but were not allowed to land, indicating the dire need for colonization.

For a long time after the Trojan war and the Dorian invasions Thucydides heard of no wars except the usual border contests between rival neighbors until conflicts over colonization and trade in the late 8th century BC seem to have led to the Lelantine war between Chalcis and Eretria in which Chalcis was aided by Samos, Thessaly, and Corinth, while Eretria was helped by Miletus and Megara. The extensive use of cavalry and chariots by both sides indicate that this may have been the last of the aristocratic wars, for already the Chalcidians were probably using their bronze technology for armor that was to revolutionize wars and society.

The first known use of the word *tyrannis* was applied by the poet Archilochus to the Lydian king Gyges. According to Herodotus, Gyges was induced by King Candaules to see the queen naked, who resenting it made Gyges choose between death and regicide. Another account has the Carian king Arselis killing the Lydian king and taking home the spoils, while his soldier Gyges seized the throne. Gyges became king of Lydia in 687 BC and ruled for 35 years, contributing much treasure to the Delphic oracle for confirming his kingship, using the Greek alphabet, and attacking Troy, Smyrna, Colophon, Miletus and Magnesia. When Cimmerians from the north were invading, Gyges got imperial assistance from the Assyrians and sent the captured Cimmerian chiefs to Nineveh. Then Gyges revolted from Assyria by sending Ionian and Carian mercenaries to help liberate Egypt from Assyrian domination. But the Cimmerians returned and without Assyrian help, Sardis was taken; Gyges was slain in battle, Ashurbanipal claiming it answered his prayer he made because Gyges had helped his enemy Psamtik in Egypt.

The Cimmerians then attacked the Greek cities, as the Ephesian poet Callinus tried to inspire the citizens to fight. The descendants and successors of Gyges drove the Cimmerians out of Anatolia by the end of the 7th century and expanded their sovereignty to the Halys River. Lydia as a center of commerce and wealth in the middle of the seventh century BC minted a mixture of gold and silver as the first coined money. The practice soon spread to Miletus and Samos and then to Chalcis and Eretria.

Greek poetry became personal with Archilochus, who faced discrimination from aristocratic privilege because his mother was a slave. Most of his poetry is lost, but the fragments tell of his experiences. He enjoyed drinking even while on watch aboard ship. He commemorated a shipwreck in which one man was saved by a dolphin, because he previously bought and released a dolphin caught by fishermen. He went with his father to colonize Thasos but found the

uncivilized country "like a donkey's back crowned with wild woods."10 The land was not good, and he found nothing but trouble. He fell in love with Neoboule; but when marriage was denied him, he broke into obscenity, said he knew how to repay wrongs with wrongs, and abused them verbally so much that she and her family reportedly hanged themselves. So Archilochus became a mercenary, like a Carian, calling his spear his barley bread and wine; he served Aries, god of battles, even though he knew well the lovely gift of the Muses. In fighting the Thracians he abandoned his shield to save his life, singing he could get another shield; but this was so much against the code of honor that he was banned from Sparta. His answer was:

> That man, my friend, who cares what people say
> Will not find many pleasures comes his way.11

Neither did Archilochus care for the gold of Gyges, godlike works, nor a great tyranny. He wrote of the grim work of swords and the spear-famed lords of Euboea. He made fun of dandy soldiers with their Asian horse-hair plumes. He warned against rejoicing or sorrowing too much and sought to understand the tide that rules human fortunes. Finally he wrote of young men keeping their courage and of victory being heaven's to give before he was killed while fighting.

Aristocratic Colophon had been the most powerful Ionian city until Lydia's power increased. Xenophanes later explained that they learned luxuries from Lydians while they were still free of tyranny. A thousand of them met dressed in purple with perfumes and proud hair. Memnermus praised those who had driven Lydian horsemen from the plain of the Hermos. He lamented the shortness of youth and the troubles and pain of age that make death a gain. Memnermus wrote the first Greek love poetry, asking what life and joy could there be without golden Aphrodite. He wrote the wonderful line I translate, "Let truth be between you and me; of all things it is most just." He encouraged you to rejoice in your heart, because pitiless citizens may speak better or worse of you.

Thucydides explained that as Greek power grew, revenues increased, people sought to acquire more wealth, and tyrannies replaced the hereditary monarchies and aristocratic prerogatives. Pheidon of Argos was described by Aristotle as a king who ended up becoming a tyrant. Pheidon unified the Argolid area and defeated the Spartans at Hysiae in 669 BC. The next year he took control of the games at Olympia whose traditional founding date of 776 BC is the main reference point for Greek chronology. Pheidon is also credited with standardizing weights and measures for the Peloponnesians, indicating a significant increase in the power of governmental authority. His military successes were likely the result of hoplite or heavy infantry troops, who wore the new bronze armor and carried the Argive double-gripped shield.

Situated at the isthmus that connects the Peloponnesian peninsula to mainland Greece, Corinth became a successful commercial center in the 8th century BC, and its pottery was traded widely. Their hereditary Dorian rulers called Bacchiadae were so exclusive that they only married within their clan. A Bacchiad epic poet named Eumelus wrote an account of the kingship to justify their house. Tolls at the isthmus amassed tremendous wealth, and Corinthians excelled in crafts. Corinth was also famous for worshipping Aphrodite and enjoying sexual love. Its colonies became so powerful that the people of Corcyra were able to defeat Corinth in what Thucydides called the first Greek naval battle in about 664 BC.

Legend surrounds the birth and rise of Cypselus, whose mother as a lame Bacchiadae was allowed to marry an outside aristocrat. A few years after the humiliating battle with Corcyra, Cypselus overthrew and banished the Bacchiad clan and took control of the government by force as a tyrant. His leadership was successful enough that it was said he needed no bodyguard. Cypselus established more colonies along the northwest coast, and the Acarnanian peninsula of Leucas was made an island separated by a canal. Grateful for the approval of the Delphic oracle, Cypselus had a treasury built there that would soon hold Lydian gifts as well.

After ruling Corinth for about 30 years, Cypselus was succeeded by his son Periander, who ruled for more than 40 years and had stone pavement with grooves built across the isthmus to improve transport. Periander's laws restricted the number of slaves, luxury, sitting idly in the marketplace, and living beyond one's means. He was always devising work for the citizens to keep them busy. Periander is listed as one of the seven sages perhaps because his court supported the arts and poetry. Yet he was also described as a fighting man always involved in war and building warships that were active on both seas. Although he said that good will is a better bodyguard than arms, his bodyguard had 300 men. The man who gave tyranny a bad name was even supposed to have said that popular rule is better than tyranny. Yet his policy was to punish not only those who do wrong but those who are likely to.

Periander married the daughter of Procles, the tyrant of Epidaurus, but later put her to death in a rage when she was slandered by some concubines, whom he then burnt. This alienated his most intelligent son Lycophron to Corcyra, where he (and possibly another son) was killed by the citizens. Periander reacted by killing 50 Corcyreans and seizing 300 children to send to Lydia to be eunuchs, but at Samos people gave them sanctuary in the temple of Artemis and fed them. After communicating with Thrasybulus, the tyrant of Miletus, with whom he made war on Sicyon, Periander killed and exiled outstanding citizens. During his rule the Greek colony of Naucratis was established in Egypt, and he named his son after the Egyptian Saite kings; but Psammetichus was killed about 581 BC after ruling only three years. An oligarchy was set up and was to last for two centuries, though some of the colonies became independent. Corinthians had improved naval ships by adding a second and then a third row of oars as a trireme. After the tyranny ended, Corinth elected a council from eight tribes.

Tyranny in Sicyon began with Orthagoras, who rose up from the army in a war against Achaean Pellene and overthrew a Dorian aristocracy in the seventh century BC. His descendant Cleisthenes became popular in Sicyon in the early sixth century BC by defending their independence against attack from Miletus and Corinth; he renamed his own tribe "rulers of the people" and the three Dorian tribes after pigs, asses, and swine. Cleisthenes supported the first Sacred War that ended the Cirrhan exploitation of pilgrims to Delphi by destroying the city of Cirrha. A league or Delphic Amphictiony was organized to protect the temple. Gymnastics were added to the musical and athletic contests of the Pythian games. Cleisthenes won victories in chariot races there and at Olympia and offered his daughter to the most outstanding suitor. Tyranny in Sicyon ended in 555 BC when Aeschines was deposed by Spartan power, and the Delphic oracle's denunciation of tyranny was respected, as an oligarchy was established.

Megara, hemmed in between Corinth and Athens, also sent out colonies and eventually was taken over in the late 7th century BC by the tyrant Theagenes, who got the poor on his side by

slaughtering the cattle of the rich and having a water-supply system built. He was expelled by oligarchs of the woolen industry, who in turn were thrown out by the lower classes; but their attempt to make creditors give back their interest to the debtors brought back an oligarchy to power. The poet Theognis regretted the loss of nobility. Theognis wrote poetry to his friend Cyrnus, warning him against anything dishonorable or unjust and advising him to consort only with the good; for the bad cannot save one from trouble and ruin nor do they share good things. Those who do good to the bad get little thanks. Human action is usually vanity with results often differing from the intention, but the gods accomplish and know everything. It is better to have little wealth and be pious than be rich with ill-gotten gain.

The following statement of Theognis was inscribed on the temple at Delos: "Most beautiful is the most just, and best is health, but most pleasant is to get what one loves." (255-256) Theognis noted that many of the bad are rich and many of the good poor, but virtue endures more than possessions. A good man has understanding that remains; but when God bestows wealth on the bad, they are unable to restrain their evil. In poverty the baser kind and the better are shown for what they are. He cautioned against being too eager in any matter lest one be drawn into something evil that seems good. Force no one by evil; to the just nothing is better than doing good. Theognis asked that peace and wealth have the city so that he may celebrate with others; he did not love evil war. He warned against responding to the herald's cry, because we may not be fighting for our own country; he considered war dishonorable. Nothing is better than understanding, and nothing more bitter than lacking it.

Theognis expressed the pessimism of his time, lamenting that Hope was the only god left, for honesty, temperance, and the graces were gone along with human trust and awe of the immortal gods. The pious generation had passed; laws were no longer recognized, nor was there order *(eunomia)*. Theognis clung to friendship especially with boys and did not desire riches. He told his friend never to do or suffer anything dishonorable and have the greatest virtue. Honor and fear the gods, for they give humans the best thing - understanding. Theognis believed that there would be no punishment *(nemesis)* from the gods for bringing down by any means a tyrant who oppressed the people.

The aristocrats' treatment of people became so bad that at Mytilene on Lesbos the Penthelids walked the streets with clubs knocking down citizens they did not like, causing Megacles and later Smerdes to kill the Penthelids. The tyrant Melanchrus arose but was soon overthrown and killed by nobles that included Pittacus and the older brothers of the poet Alcaeus. In fighting over the control of the Hellespont, Pittacus defeated the Olympic champion and Athenian general Phrynon in single combat by concealing a net in his shield to entangle him. The people of Mytilene offered Pittacus half the land for which he had fought, but he declined and arranged for everyone to have an equal lot, saying, "The equal is greater than the greater," by which he meant that the fairness of equality would lead to renown and security, but greed to disgrace and fear. However, the Corinthian tyrant Periander arbitrated the conflict in favor of Athens. When the popular leader Myrsilus arose in Mytilene, Pittacus renounced the aristocratic party of Alcaeus and supported Myrsilus, whom the party of Alcaeus plotted to murder; but being discovered they fled. Myrsilus attacked these exiles but was killed. Nonetheless Pittacus was honored and entrusted with the government of Mytilene, ruled for ten years with moderation and restraint, and then retired, refusing money offered him by Croesus.

Considered one of the seven sages of this era Pittacus believed that mercy is better than revenge and was said to have pardoned the murderer of his son and to have released Alcaeus. To discourage drunkenness he doubled the penalty for any offense committed while intoxicated. He said that it was hard to be good, and he noted that even the gods don't fight against necessity and that the office can reveal the person. He said the best thing is to do well the work in hand, and the best rule is by laws. He urged people to win victories without violence and said that the prudent provide against difficulties before they arise, while the courageous deal with them when they have arisen. He advised against announcing plans ahead so that if they fail, one will not be laughed at. He counseled against speaking ill of a friend or an enemy, and he exhorted people to practice piety, love moderation, and cherish truth, fidelity, skill, cleverness, sociability, and carefulness.

In fighting for Mytilene over Sigeum the poet Alcaeus, like Archilochus, left his shield on the field. Alcaeus criticized Pittacus as low-born, vulgar, boastful, arrogant, and envious with many boorish qualities. Exiled Alcaeus traveled to Egypt and after many years ended up in Lydia with his brother, who had been a mercenary for Babylon. Their rebellion against Mytilene was supported by Croesus but failed, and this is when Pittacus may have pardoned Alcaeus. The poetry of Alcaeus celebrated drinking. He believed that money made the man, that wealth is the best and most desired of all the gods, and that poverty was the worst evil.

A friend and contemporary of Alcaeus at Lesbos, Sappho commented that the exiles found peace difficult to endure. Sappho became famous for her verses, devotion to Aphrodite, and her love for the women of her circle, from which we get the modern meaning of Lesbian. Little is known of her life, but apparently Sappho was married and had a daughter more beautiful than she. Women came from other places to celebrate and sing with her. She wrote that whoever is beautiful is seen, but that whoever is good will also be beautiful. Different than Alcaeus, she found from experience that neighbors find wealth without goodness harmful but that both together are the height of happiness. Like the sages, she warned against anger and a babbling tongue. Believing that love is more powerful than armies, she wrote to her friend Anactoria that she moves her more than the cavalry and armored soldiers of Lydia.

In Lydia King Alyattes ruled for more than half a century and was fooled into making an armistice with Miletus, whose tyrant Thrasybulus was advised by Delphi and warned by Periander to pretend they had ample food after suffering the destruction of twelve annual harvests, though Alyattes did order a massacre at Colophon. Lydia's kingdom came into conflict with the expanding Assyrian empire but made peace with them after an eclipse of the sun in 585 BC predicted by the Milesian philosopher Thales. Alyattes also attacked and destroyed Magnesia and Smyrna, as we learn from the poet Theognis, but the Lydian horses were defeated by the men of Clazomenae using war-dogs.

Alyattes was succeeded by Croesus about 560 BC with the help of a loan from prosperous Ephesus; but then Croesus laid siege to Ephesus, and its young tyrant Pindarus gave up his power so that peace could be arranged. Thus Croesus forced the Greek cities in Asia to pay him tribute and began to plan an attack on the islands but was dissuaded by Bias (some say Pittacus), who appeared in Sardis saying (falsely) that the islanders were preparing an attack against the Lydian capital of Sardis. Bias explained to Croesus that just as he might want to defeat them on

land, they might want to defeat Lydian ships at sea to revenge their brothers on the mainland who had been enslaved by Lydia. So Croesus stopped the ship-building and made peace with the islands. Encouraged by a Delphic prophecy that he would destroy a great empire, Croesus attacked the Persians about 544 BC but was defeated and captured, destroying his own empire.

Miletus retained some independence, but after the fall of the tyrants, a bitter conflict developed between the wealthy and the workers in which each side murdered the children of their enemies. Even the poets Phocylides and Demodicus exchanged bitter words, as the land was devastated. Finally some Parians were delegated to search throughout the territory for lands not devastated and summoned their owners to an assembly, which led to peace and Miletus becoming the most prosperous Greek city in Asia. Phocylides supported this effort and encouraged people to become wealthy by cultivating their fields, though he himself believed that moderation and being in the middle class was best. He was among the first to make the word for excellence mean virtue when he wrote. "In justice all of virtue *(areté)* is summarized," though he recommended getting a living first and then virtue after that.

On the Ionian island of Samos the aristocratic landlords replaced the king. In the middle of the seventh century BC they got ships from Corinth, traded with Sparta, and one of their merchant ships went beyond the Mediterranean Sea to the silver mines of Tartessus in Iberia. They sent the poet Semonides to found a colony on the island of Amorgas. Semonides satirized women by comparing them to various animals, the only positive one being the busy bee. As with Hesiod's portrayal of Pandora bringing plagues to humanity, this reflects the patriarchy and negative views of women in Greek culture. However, the Samian oligarchs were overthrown when the generals they appointed returned with 600 captured Megarians, whom they slyly unchained, armed with daggers, and allowed to murder the aristocratic council.

When Samos suffered under Persian domination, Polycrates rose to power as tyrant in 532 BC with the help of his two brothers, but he soon killed one and exiled the other (Syloson). Polycrates borrowed mercenaries from Lygdamis of Naxos, recruited a thousand local archers, and mobilized a fleet to engage in piracy and wars and to trade with Egypt at Naucratis. However, Polycrates sent his oligarchic political rivals on forty ships to help the Persian emperor Cambyses attack Egypt, but was able to fight them off when they returned even when they got Sparta's help. These Samian exiles then returned to piracy and settled in Cydonia on Crete until they were attacked and defeated by an Aeginetan fleet in 519 BC. Meanwhile Polycrates collected the songs of Homer and welcomed the erotic poets Ibycus and Anacreon, though the philosopher Pythagoras left Samos for Italy. However, in 522 BC Oroites in Sardis offered him half his treasure if Polycrates would come to protect him from Cambyses, whom he said wanted to assassinate him. When Polycrates went to Sardis, he was murdered there, and the next year Darius succeeding Cambyses had Oroites executed by his own Persian guards.

Polycrates had appointed his ambassador Maeandrius to succeed him; Maeandrius resigned his power and declared *isonomia* or equal rights but started having the aristocrats murdered secretly one by one before he was driven out by Syloson, the brother of Polycrates who was supported by the Persians. Maeandrius left his brother to attack the Persian noblemen and fled to Cleomenes of Sparta who refused to help him. In revenge the Persians were said to have massacred all the males on Samos.

Anacreon was from Ionian Teos, but he left there about 540 BC after Sardis was taken by the Persians and his home was threatened. The Teans sailed to Abdera in Thrace and took over the colony from the Clazomenians. There he wrote an epitaph for a warrior who died fighting for Abdera; for those who wished to fight he said let them fight. Most of his poetry, however, was about love and drinking. He fell in love with a Thracian girl and wanted to ride her like a horse. He was invited to Samos by Polycrates to instruct his son in music and poetry. He wrote of the political party called the "Mutterers" who held sway. Anacreon sang of the love for boys to make Polycrates more gentle to the Samians, according to Maximus of Tyre. Anacreon was made welcome in Athens by Hipparchus and spent many years there. His poetry was so popular that it was widely imitated for three centuries.

Spartan Military Laws

The southern part of the Peloponnesian peninsula was called Laconia, and its capital city was the legendary Sparta of Menelaus; the area Sparta ruled was called Lacedaemon. After the fall of the Mycenaeans, the Dorians took over this area of rare iron mines and established in Sparta a dual kingship, commanding the army and making war as they chose. The laws of Sparta were said to have been given by the legendary Lycurgus shortly after the time of Homer. The two kings were joined by 28 men over the age of 60 elected for life by the assembly to the council of elders, which was the supreme court for criminal cases. Five ephors elected annually by the assembly administered and judged civil cases. The assembly consisted of 9,000 men over the age of 30; they were treated all alike and each had their own allotment of land, though Aristotle noted that the number of citizens dropped to 1,000. The farm work was done by the Helots, serfs attached to the land who could not be freed nor sold. Eventually a secret police was instituted to counter the threat of a Helot revolution. Every year the ephors declared war on the Helots so that young citizens could slay any Helot without fear of being tried for murder. Those who lived in surrounding areas involved in industry, commerce, and navigation were not considered free either.

The citizens lived their entire lives under strict discipline. Weak and deformed infants were exposed or thrown off a cliff. At the age of seven they joined a "herd" under the direction of an older officer, and from 13 to 20 their class went through a sequence of harsh discipline and training while not even knowing their own homes and relatives. Their twenties were devoted to military service, and they did not become full citizens until they were 30. They continued to fight as reserves in war until they were 60, after which they only had to defend the homeland.

Plutarch in his *Life of Lycurgus* credited the lawgiver with redistribution of the land into equal lots, but Aristotle citing the poet Tyrtaeus explained that citizens ruined by the Messenian War wanted the land redistributed. Other reforms Plutarch attributed to Lycurgus were the calling in of all gold and silver so that iron could be used as money, outlawing superfluous arts, and instituting common meals. For Lycurgus children were not the property of their parents but of the whole community. Plutarch described the strict Spartan discipline designed to perfect the ready exercise of obedience. Youngsters were not given enough food so that they would learn how to steal; if they were caught, they were whipped without mercy for being incompetent.

They did sing but of virtue and discipline. Terpander sang that in them spear and song met, and justice walked with them. The lyric poet Alcman sang that he knew all the songs of the birds and that experiment is the beginning of learning. Lycurgus was said to have proved that education was more important than heredity by training one dog from a litter to hunt while feeding another; then tossing out food and bones and releasing a hare, one dog chased the hare while the other ate the food. Others say that he trained a puppy from a hunting breed to be lazy and an inferior puppy to hunt, concluding that we must train ourselves and learn what is good throughout our lives. Their regular training and exercise were so strict that war seemed like a vacation. To see them marching to flutes in strict discipline to the fatal fight was described as a magnificent and terrible sight. Those who resisted them they cut to pieces, but those who fled and surrendered they treated magnanimously so that others would do the same.

The entire city was like a camp with the men living in barracks. Even on his wedding night, a Spartan visited his wife only briefly to perform his conjugal duty before returning to the barracks to sleep. Women were made to exercise so that they would bear healthier children; but according to Aristotle Lacedaemonian women were lawless, and even Lycurgus could not bring them under his laws. With equal poverty and little talk, lawsuits were rare. Everyone was trained to support the public good and to act with public spirit. Persians asking Spartan ambassadors if they came in a public or private capacity were told by Polycratidas that if they succeeded, public; but if they failed, private. However, foreign travel was discouraged to prevent corruption by other customs, and few foreigners were allowed to stay in Sparta. Plutarch believed that the customs established by Lycurgus became more cruel after the Helots had revolted with the Messenians and destroyed the country.

According to the legend after giving them laws Lycurgus made them agree to follow them until he came back. Then he consulted the Delphic oracle and having gained its approval starved himself to death. The Cretans claimed that they burned his body and scattered his ashes so that the Spartans could never claim his body was returned. Spartan laws may have been brought by the poet Thaletas to Gortyna in Crete. Plutarch concluded that Lacedaemon in strictly observing the laws of Lycurgus was the chief city of all Greece for five hundred years.

The Spartan citizens were educated to think and discuss, since they did no work in agriculture or industry or commerce, but only fought wars and discussed political issues; they nevertheless were taught to speak succinctly. Laconic sayings were short and often as sharp as their swords. Their way of opposing invasion was by continuing poor and not coveting more than others. When an Athenian accused them of having no learning, a Spartan replied they had learned none of their bad qualities. Spartan women were as patriotic as the men, often slaying or disowning sons who returned from war as cowards. One Spartan woman handing her son his shield said laconically, "With it or on it," meaning he had better not return alive without his shield.

Aristotle found that though sale of land was forbidden, gifts were allowed; therefore much land was in few hands, and women by inheritance and large dowries held nearly two-fifths of it. Yet Lycurgus was supposed to have banned dowries and use of make-up so that girls would be chosen for their good character. Aristotle criticized the Spartan constitution for having the ephors elected by the assembly, because they were likely to elect the poor, who are subject to bribery. He also criticized the elders for taking bribes and in serving for life getting too old. Aristotle

found the common meals faulty, because they were not provided at public expense; but each person had to contribute, causing the poor to be excluded. Plato found that the maturity of the elders moderated the pride of the kings, and the election of the ephors provided a democratic check; but he noted that the Spartans were able to excel in war but knew nothing of the arts of peace.

In the late eighth century BC Spartans invaded Messenia and took half their territory, reducing the Messenians to the condition of Helots. Tyrtaeus described the conquered as asses worn by intolerable loads and compelled by the stress of cruel force. Reforms were brought about by the two kings Polydorus and Theopompus, who went along with his radical colleague. Polydorus was respected and popular because he never offended with language or violence and was just and compassionate in his judgments. The poet Terpander praised Sparta for doing justice in the open-air assembly. Polydorus led the Spartans at Hysiae about 669 BC, when they were defeated by Argives led by Pheidon. Polydorus was assassinated by a Laconian aristocrat named Polemarchus. A few years later an aristocratic Messenian named Aristomenes led a revolt, which was successful for a while until the songs of Tyrtaeus inspired the Spartans, and after many years the retreating Messenians were finally defeated. Then Tyrtaeus wrote a poem on law called *Eunomia*, as the Messenian land was divided into equal portions and distributed to Spartans and their allies.

Eventually the iron discipline and the limited iron money system reduced the quality of Spartan life. Helots were offered their freedom by the state if they fought bravely. Early in the sixth century BC Spartans asked at Delphi if they could take Arcadia, but the oracle said the Arcadians would not allow it, though Spartans would dance with noisy feet at Tegea. So the Lacedaemonians decided to limit their ambitions to Tegea and took with them fetters to enslave the inhabitants; but after they lost the battle, fettered Spartan feet fulfilled the prophecy. Next the oracle told them to get the bones of Orestes. So the Spartans dug up the bones of a large man they claimed had been Orestes to gain anti-Dorian support. A new policy of liberating states from tyrants was supported by the Delphic oracle.

Chilon, who was elected ephor in the middle of the 6th century BC, was considered one of the seven sages of this era. When he asked Aesop what Zeus was doing, the fable-maker replied that he is humbling the proud and exalting the humble. Chilon believed that education provided hope, but that it is hard to keep a secret, to employ leisure well, and to be able to bear an injury. He recommended controlling one's tongue, not abusing neighbors, not using threats which he considered womanish, visiting friends in adversity more than in prosperity, honoring old age, considering safety, preferring loss to dishonest gain, not laughing at another's misfortune, being merciful when strong, controlling anger, not aiming at the impossible, obeying the laws, and being restful. He died shortly after his son won the Olympic boxing championship due to excess of joy and old age.

About 547 BC Sparta befriended Lydian king Croesus and gained many allies in order to invade the Argolid, where 300 champions from each side killed each other at Thyrea except for two Argives who went back to Argos and one Spartan who stripped the dead and claimed victory, which after a quarrel and a battle was confirmed by the Spartan hoplites' defeat of the Argive army. Lacedaemon was now the largest centrally governed territory and population in Greece,

and their gymnastic training and military discipline were far more advanced than the other Greek cities. Sparta attacked Samos about 525 BC.

Spartan king Cleomenes was praised for saying do good to friends and harm to enemies, but the other king Ariston asked if it wouldn't be better to do good to friends and make enemies into friends. Cleomenes said that Homer was the poet of the Spartans because he encouraged men to make war, and that Hesiod was the poet of the Helots, because he encouraged farming. Cleomenes went beyond the Peloponnese to expel the Athenian tyrant Hippias in 510 BC. Two years later Cleomenes intervened again in Athens on behalf of Isagoras to expel the Alcmaeonids the Spartans hated, dissolved the Athenian council of 500, and set up an oligarchy. When the Athenian council refused to dissolve itself and besieged the Spartan king in the Acropolis, Cleomenes and Isagoras gave up and were allowed to return to Sparta; but the oligarchs were imprisoned, condemned, and executed.

Next Cleomenes tried to impose his own regime there with the help of Boeotians and Chalcidians of Euboea, but the Corinthian allies refused to fight at Eleusis, and the other Spartan king Demaratus and allies followed that example. Having discovered in the Acropolis Delphic prophecies that showed Alcmaeonid scheming against them and the previous Athenian tyrants, Cleomenes called a conference of their allies in Sparta, asking them to support the return of Hippias to power in Athens. However, Sosicles the Corinthian told how Corinth had suffered under tyrants, objected to Sparta's attempt to overthrow a free government in order to install a tyrant, and won over the other allies to this view. When Maeandrius, the tyrant of Samos, fled from the Persians to Sparta and offered Cleomenes gold and silver goblets, Cleomenes not only refused these and would not aid him, but he got the ephors to banish Maeandrius so that he would not corrupt Spartans.

Athenian Political Laws

Athens, having been united by the legendary Theseus before the Trojan war, managed to fend off the Dorian invasions. A military chief was added to the kingship, and in the eleventh century BC Acastus of the aristocratic Medontids allowed the first ruler (archon) to be elected for life. In the middle of the eighth century BC this office was reduced to ten years, and in 682 BC to annual election. Birth and wealth were the main considerations for the election of the king-archon, the first archon, and military leader, who were soon joined by six lawgivers to help judge cases. These nine were advised by and, after their year in office, joined the council of nobles called the Areopagus to serve for life, protecting the laws and inflicting punishments and fines. The assembly of citizens elected the nine archons. Athens gained control of all Attica by taking over Eleusis about 675 BC. The Olympic victor Phrynon led an expedition to the region of Troy to seize the strategic town of Sigeum, though they had to fight a prolonged war with Mytilene, whose ruler Pittacus killed Phrynon in a duel. The conflict was settled by the tyrant Periander of Corinth in favor of Athens.

In 632 BC Cylon, who had previously won the Olympic games and had married the daughter of Megara's tyrant Theagenes, used that relationship and a Delphic pronouncement to seize the Acropolis of Athens during the grand festival of Zeus. However, the Athenians flocked around and laid siege to the citadel until Cylon and his brother escaped and the rest surrendered from

hunger; but Megacles of the Alcmaeonid family who was archon went back on his word and had them killed as they came out. The Alcmaeonids were tried, condemned to exile, and their property was confiscated, putting the family under a curse or pollution.

Laws had been given by Zaleucus to the Lokroi in Italy, by Charondas to Catana in Sicily, and by Androdamas of Rhegion. So Dracon was appointed in 621 BC to codify the laws of Athens, and he differentiated intentional murder from unintentional killing which continued to be the law even after Solon's reforms. Dracon instituted the jury *(ephetai)* of 51 nobles and allowed the state to take over what before had been settled by blood feuds. However, Draconian laws were infamous for their severity of using capital punishment for even minor offenses such as stealing a cabbage or an apple. Laws concerning debt were stringent and based on class since the poor debtor could become a slave, though the poor may have gained some protection in having laws committed to writing. Small farmers were called "sixth-parters" probably because they had to give that portion of their crop to their landlords. Aristotle noted that the harshest part of most people's lives was their subjection to the rich.

Since his father had ruined his estate by benefiting others, Solon became a merchant and gained wealth, though he said he would not procure it by wrong, because justice though slow is sure. Tired of battling the Megarians over the island of Salamis, the Athenians made it a capital crime to suggest recovering it, but Solon was said to have feigned madness while reciting his verses on Salamis in the marketplace until his kinsman Peisistratus led the citizens to repeal the law and retake Salamis. Anacharsis became Solon's friend and laughed at him for believing that the dishonest and covetous would be restrained by written laws, which are like spider webs in that they would catch the poor but be easily broken by the rich and powerful. Solon replied that he would design his laws so that it would be more beneficial to be just than to break them. Solon exhorted the rich not to be so grasping, warning them that they would not always have their way, because they would not always be obeyed.

In Athens the disparity between the rich and poor had become very great, and most people had to pay one-sixth of their crop to the landlord or had fallen into slavery from debt. Solon, who had not joined the oppressive methods of the rich but did not suffer the needs of the poor, was elected archon in 594 BC and chosen to give laws, the rich agreeing because he was wealthy, the poor because he was honest. When he said he would make things even, the rich thought he meant a fair proportion, but others that everyone would be equal. Not submitting to the powerful nor pleasing the others, Solon refrained from the violence and usurpation of a tyrant to make new laws for Athens that would combine force and justice. When asked if they were the best laws that could be given, he replied that they were the best the Athenians could receive. The archons or magistrates had to swear to observe the laws or dedicate a golden statue to the gods if they failed to do so, and the assembly of the citizens could hear such cases to check them.

First Solon canceled debts to relieve the poor and did not allow a person to be security for a debt. The mortgage stones that had been placed on most people's land were removed, and slaves were freed. However, some of his friends knowing he was going to cancel debts borrowed money to buy land, which brought suspicion and enmity upon Solon, but he at least released his debtors of five talents. The moderate Solon was criticized by the rich for their loss of money and by the poor because he did not redistribute the land, as Sparta had. He repealed Dracon's laws for being

too severe except for those on homicide. He allowed the lowest class of workers to come into the assembly as jurors; farmers having more than 200 measures could serve in the new council; the knights having more than 300 and the fourth class of rich with more than 500 measures could be elected to high offices. Birth was no longer a prerequisite. He allowed and encouraged any citizen to prosecute a wrong-doer not just the victims, saying that the best city is where those who are not injured punish the unjust as much as those who are. He founded a council of 400 from the four tribes to inspect matters before they went to the assembly.

Solon limited dowries to three suits of clothes and a few household items so that wives would be selected for love and children. Realizing that Athenian agriculture was becoming inadequate to their needs, he encouraged trades and ordered the Areopagus to punish the idle. Food, except for olive oil, was not to be exported. Any man who neglected to provide for his parents was disenfranchised unless he had not been taught a trade. He reduced the money paid to athletic champions while providing for the sons of those killed in battle. His laws protected boys from sexual assaults and required every citizen to teach his sons to read and write.

Having given them laws, Solon traveled for ten years to let them work. Solon suggested learning something new every day. He learned of Atlantis from Egyptian priests and declined to consider the rich Lydian king Croesus happy, because his life was not over yet. Aesop told Solon to make his conversations with kings short or seasonable, to which Solon replied that short or reasonable was better. The moderate Solon is credited with the famous Greek motto of nothing excessive. According to Aristotle there were four years of peace after Solon's departure, but then in two of the next five years the citizens were not able to elect an archon because of dissension resulting in *anarchia*. Then an archon named Damasias stayed in office for 26 months until he was removed by force.

Solon returned to Athens to find that Peisistratus had become a popular leader, finding the poor gratifying Peisistratus and the rich afraid of him. In 561 BC Peisistratus wounded himself and his mules; then he drove into the marketplace, saying that he had just escaped from his enemies that had attacked him on the road. Reminding them of his victory over the Megarians and the taking of Nisaea, he requested a bodyguard for protection, and the assembly voted him a guard of men carrying clubs. Peisistratus and his followers then seized the Acropolis and began ruling Athens. So Solon went to the marketplace and exhorted the Athenians not to lose their liberty, that although it was easier to stop tyranny before, now it would be more glorious to destroy it. Though he failed, Solon considered himself wiser than those who did not see that Peisistratus wanted to be a tyrant and braver than those who saw it but kept silent. He wrote in a poem that if they suffer, they should not blame higher powers which are good, because it was their fault that they had put the strongholds into his hands. However, Peisistratus remained his friend, honored him, listened to his advice, and retained most of his laws.

The other parties, the moderate shore party led by Megacles and the oligarchic party of the plain led by Lycurgus, united and drove Peisistratus out of Athens; but later Megacles offered Peisistratus his daughter in marriage. So Peisistratus used another dramatic means to establish himself as ruler in Athens. This time he clothed a tall and beautiful woman in armor, put her on a chariot, and drove her into the city as though she were Athena herself bringing back her favorite. Peisistratus was also the one who supported the first actor Thespis and promoted the festival of

Dionysus which developed tragedies and comedies; but Solon commented when Peisistratus took power that this is what comes of having tragedies performed. Since Peisistratus was reluctant to have children by the daughter of Megacles because of the curse on the Alcmaeonids, Megacles turned against Peisistratus, who once again fled to Eretria and Mount Pangaeus, which had rich mines where he raised money and gained allies including Thebans and the Naxian Lygdamis. In 546 BC Peisistratus, supported by the hill people, landed at Marathon and defeated the Athenians defending their laws in the battle at Pallene.

Peisistratus managed to get at least one person from his family elected into high office each year and controlled the government. He kept a small standing army for protection and sent young hostages from opposing families to Lygdamis in Naxos. Nevertheless many of his policies were beneficial. Peisistratus divided vacant land into lots and gave them and loans to the poor, who only had to pay one-tenth of their produce as tax; later this tax was cut in half. He instituted local judges, and he was known for respecting the laws without giving himself privileges and for being kind to the people. Industry and trade continued to improve, and he assured trade with the Black Sea area by retaking Sigeum and sent Miltiades, a political opponent, to develop a colony in the Thracian Chersonese.

When Peisistratus died in 527 BC, his sons Hippias and Hipparchus succeeded him in power. The oldest, Hippias, controlled the government, while Hipparchus promoted festivals and literature, inviting Anacreon, Simonides, and other poets to Athens. In 519 BC Athens won a war over Thebes to take Plataea. However, the jealousy of another son led two assassins in 514 BC to kill Hipparchus, but Hippias escaped. One of the assassins was killed, and the other tortured gave the names of many nobles. After this incident the tyranny became much harsher as many people were executed or banished. The exiles led by the Alcmaeonids rebuilt the Delphic temple after the fire, and resulting prophecies often encouraged the Lacedaemonians to free Athens, leading Spartan king Cleomenes to expel Hippias in 510 BC. Two years later Isagoras, a partisan of the tyrants, was elected archon, while the Alcmaeonid Cleisthenes opposed them. Aristotle described what happened next.

> Cleisthenes, being beaten in the political clubs, called in the people by giving the franchise to the masses. Thereupon Isagoras, finding himself left inferior in power, invited Cleomenes, who was united to him by ties of hospitality, to return to Athens, and persuaded him to "drive out the pollution," a plea derived from the fact that the Alcmaeonids were supposed to be under the curse of pollution. On this Cleisthenes retired from the country, and Cleomenes, entering Attica with a small force, expelled, as polluted, seven hundred Athenian families. Having affected this, he next attempted to dissolve the Council, and to set up Isagoras and three hundred of his partisans as the supreme power in the state. The Council, however, resisted, the populace flocked together, and Cleomenes and Isagoras, with their adherents, took refuge in the Acropolis. Here the people sat down and besieged them for two days; and on the third they agreed to let Cleomenes and all his followers depart, while they summoned Cleisthenes and the other exiles back to Athens.12

Cleisthenes then reorganized the entire population into ten tribes with thirty groups of *demes*, each tribe having one group in the city, the coast area, and the interior. The council was enlarged to 500 with fifty chosen by lot from each tribe. In 501 BC they took their first oath, and ten generals were elected, one from each tribe. Citizens could only serve on the council for a year and after an interval only one more year, but members of the assembly could be re-elected. The council was responsible for placing business before the assembly and essentially replaced the

aristocratic Areopagus council. To prevent a tyrant from taking over, a way of voting to ostracize one man for ten years was designed, but it was not used for twenty years. Athens was strengthened by greater participation that now included foreigners and ex-slaves.

The Corinthians and Spartans changed their minds at Eleusis about attacking Athens, and then the Athenians defeated the Chalcidean and Boeotian armies on the same day in 506 BC. Herodotus described how the Athenians ransomed the captured Chalcidian aristocrats, and he credited their victory to their newly found freedom. When the Spartan league met, Sparta, Thebes, and Aegina wanted to reinstate Hippias in Athens; but the Corinthians who hated tyranny talked them out of it.

Aesop's *Fables*

The animal fables associated with the name Aesop are based on folklore that is very ancient, going back to early Sumerian stories, Old Babylonian tales written in Akkadian, followed by texts in Assyrian and Aramaic, including the *Book of Achiqar*. Some of them have been found on Egyptian papyri a millennium before Aesop, and many are similar to the animal folktales later written down in the *Panchatantra* of India. Aesop came from Thrace and was a slave of Iadmon on the island of Samos about 620 BC. According to Herodotus Iadmon's grandson turned him in for the Delphian reward because he was thought to have embezzled money from Croesus intended for the Delphic temple, though some scholars doubt these charges are true. Some of Aesop's fables were taken from the poetry of Archilochus. Plato's Phaedo has Socrates putting Aesop's fables into verse during his last days in prison. The fabulous stories of animals interacting like people and yet concerned with basic instincts like eating and fear of being eaten are each summed up by Aesop with a concise moral point; these became so proverbial that many of them are still quite familiar today.

The stories are delightful and enlightening for adults as well as children. The short and simple tales make complex moral points quite clear. Here are some of those moral conclusions. Some begrudge others what they cannot enjoy themselves. Appearances often are deceiving. Honesty is the best policy. Flatterers are not to be trusted. Don't bite the hand that feeds you. Beware of promises from the desperate. Do not count your chickens before they hatch. Prepare today for the needs of tomorrow. Proposing is one thing; implementation another, which was learned by the council of mice who wanted to put a bell on the cat. Calling the grapes one cannot reach sour is despising what one cannot get. Don't trust those in difficulties. An old trick may be played once too often. The smaller the mind the greater the conceit. Having many friends can mean having no friends. Lean freedom is better than fat slavery. The greedy who want more may lose all. Revenge is not worth giving up liberty. United we stand; divided we fall. By neglecting old friends for new ones, one may lose both. One good turn deserves another. Trouble may come from where it is least expected. Those discontented on one place are not likely to find happiness in another. One person's meat may be another's poison.

Those who choose to be under a tyrant deserve what they get. As in the body, so in the state, each member must work for the common good. Let well enough alone (or if it isn't broken, don't fix it). Once deceived is twice as cautious. Try to please all, and you may end by pleasing none. False confidence precedes misfortune. Beware of an insincere friend. Familiarity breeds

contempt. Necessity is the mother of invention. Whoever does something well does not need to boast. Whoever laughs last laughs best. Being satisfied with what one has is better than desiring what one cannot have. Praying against one's neighbor can bring a curse upon oneself. People often mistake notoriety for fame. There is always someone worse off. Do to others what you would have them do to you. Liars often get caught in their own lies. A bad temper carries with it its own punishment. The ignorant despise what is precious because they cannot understand it. Money is valuable not for its possession but for its use. It's safer to know your guest before offering hospitality. Do something good yourself before criticizing others.

Even the wildest can be tamed by love. Misery loves company. A change of scenery does not change one's character. The gods help those who help themselves. If you want something done well, do it yourself. Half a loaf is better than none. We learn by the misfortunes of others. Self-conceit leads to self-destruction. One good plan that works is better than a hundred doubtful ones. Clothes may disguise a fool, but words will give one away. Choose allies for their power as well as for their will to help you. Hypocrisy cloaks villainy. Quality is more important than quantity. One seeking a compliment may discover the truth. In union is strength. Often what is most useful is despised. Any excuse will serve a tyrant. Those who exploit their neighbors' difficulties may live to regret it. Persuasion is better than force. The shepherd boy who cried "Wolf!" too often proved that liars are not believed even when they tell the truth. Beware of a friend with an ulterior motive.

No act of kindness is ever wasted. Those who live on expectation will be disappointed. A crust eaten in peace is better than a banquet in anxiety. You are judged by the company you keep. Don't believe everything you hear. Those who plot the destruction of their neighbors are often caught in their own snares. It is better to bend than to break. Example is the best precept. Too much cunning overreaches. Fools give their enemy the means of destroying them. To the selfish all are selfish. Pride goes before a fall. A bribe in hand betrays mischief at heart. Whoever incites to strife is worse than those who take part in it.

Pythagoras and Early Philosophy

The origin of western philosophy is often identified with the first natural philosophers of Ionia and in particular Thales of Miletus. Thales visited Egypt, but it was probably the Babylonian astronomical records that enabled him to predict an eclipse of the sun for the year 585 BC. As the most powerful Greek city in Asia, he advised Miletus not to form an alliance with Croesus of Lydia, though it was said that he enabled the Lydian army to cross the Halys River by diverting part of it into another channel. According to Herodotus, after Croesus was defeated by the Medes and before the Persian empire took over Greek Ionia, Thales suggested that the Ionians establish a central seat of government in Teos which would still allow the other cities to enjoy their own laws.

Aristotle reported that to prove he could make his knowledge practical Thales used his astrological wisdom to predict an abundant olive crop and hired all the oil presses in Miletus and Chios when they were cheap and then leased them later at a great profit, showing that philosophers could become rich; but that is not what they pursue. He learned how to calculate the height of something by measuring its shadow. Thales speculated that everything was like water,

though he maintained that all things are full of the gods or soul and spirits and that the intelligence of the universe is divine. One account of how there came to be seven recognized sages in Greece has it that some fishermen presented a tripod to Delphi, and the oracle told them to give it to the wisest. So they gave it to Thales, who passed it on to another, who did the same until it came to Solon, who declared that God is the wisest and sent it to Delphi.

Thales said that most ancient is God, being uncreated; most beautiful: the universe, being God's craft; the greatest: space, which holds everything; the swiftest: the mind which speeds everywhere; the strongest: necessity which masters all; and the wisest: time, which brings everything to light. Probably believing in the immortality of the soul, Thales held that there is no difference between life and death. When someone asked then why he did not die, he replied, "Because there is no difference." When asked what is difficult, he replied, "To know yourself;" what is easy: "To give advice to another;" what is most pleasant: "Success;" what is divine: "That which has neither beginning nor end;" and what is the strangest thing he ever saw: "An aged tyrant." 13 When asked how to lead the best and most just life, he said, "By refraining from doing what we blame in others." When asked who is happy, he said, "The one with a healthy body, a resourceful mind, and a docile nature."14 He advised people to remember their friends present or absent, to shun ill-gotten gains, not to pride themselves on outward appearance, but to study to be beautiful in character.

Thales was followed in Miletus by Anaximander, who instead of speculating there is a single element held that everything is indefinite and infinite. He wrote a book on physics, which is the Greek word for nature and astonished people by publishing a geographical map of the known world. In speculating on the laws of the universe Anaximander touched on ethics when he posited the cosmic principle that everyone pays a penalty of retribution to others for any injustice according to the assessment of Time. In speculating about the infinite he conceived of innumerable worlds being born, dissolved, and born again according to the age to which they can survive. He thought motion was eternal and wondered if humans had been at some time like fish. Anaximenes in turn studied with Anaximander and later Parmenides. He speculated that air or moisture is the infinite element though it can be as hot and fine as fire or condense into water, earth, and stone.

By the early 6th century BC the Greek colonies in Italy had become large and prosperous; Sybaris with about 100,000 people was perhaps the largest Greek city state then. Often in conflict with Crotona, the two cities together destroyed the town of Siris in about 530 BC. The philosopher Pythagoras left Samos shortly after Polycrates became tyrant there and came to Crotona about 531 BC when he was about forty years old. His father Mnesarchus may have been a Phoenician or at least went to Tyre to trade, although later Pythagoreans believed that their teacher was the son of the god Apollo and Pythais. Pythagoras traveled much and was initiated in various mysteries, perhaps studying with Egyptian priests for as long as twenty years. Iamblichus in his *Life of Pythagoras* wrote that he studied with the Syrian Pherecydes as well as Anaximander and Thales. Later he attended Pherecydes when he was dying.

At Crotona in Italy Pythagoras found people most receptive to his mystical teachings. There he founded a school and religious community, which shared all things in common; many others came to listen to him but lived independently. When someone left the community after having

given them one's worldly goods, twice as much was returned. Managers took care of the material things. Though he never wrote anything himself and many of his teachings were secret, they were passed on by his disciples for generations. Based on these accounts later biographers wrote that he could remember his past lives and even proved that he had fought in the Trojan War. Xenophanes told how Pythagoras stopped the whipping of a puppy, because he recognized the soul of a friend. He taught the immortality of the soul, which goes through many lives by reincarnating *(metempsychosis).* Many miracles and clairvoyant abilities were attributed to him, including having been at two distant places on the same day. It was said he never over-indulged his appetites nor did he punish anyone in anger.

Later accounts claimed that his teachings helped to liberate many cities in southern Italy and Sicily. He taught the young to respect their elders and the adults to honor the gods. As he encouraged the control of desires, his main method was educational in developing the mind through learning. Instead of calling himself wise he pursued wisdom through friendship and therefore called himself a philosopher, possibly the first to do so. *Philia* means friendship and *sophia* wisdom. Life, he said, is like the great games in which the best role is spectator; most people hunt for gain or fame, but philosophers search for the truth.

Pythagoras urged the Crotonians to build a temple to the Muses, and he emphasized justice based on equality. He married Theano, and they both taught that intercourse within marriage did not make anyone impure so that they could enter a temple even on the same day. He advised women to love their husbands as much as they wanted and asked them not to consider that they had subjected their husbands whenever they yielded anything to them. Pythagoras especially urged the young to learn. He had about three hundred followers, and more than that came to his lectures. Music was very important in his school and was used for healing; the advanced students also studied mathematics. Diet was also important for health, and those initiated abstained from animal foods, alcohol, and beans. To be initiated candidates had to be tested by the master's assessment of their characters; a long period of silence was required. Dressed in white for purity, each day they took solitary walks in the morning and in small groups in the afternoon. Calmness and gentleness were encouraged. They did not hunt nor associate with hunters or butchers. Pythagoras suggested reviewing the previous day upon awaking and before going to sleep at night.

Pythagoras taught that all life is akin, and so he believed in universal friendship; he did not worship at altars where animals were sacrificed. Pythagoreans became known for their close friendships and devotion to each other. He often taught through symbolism so that the deeper teachings were not given to the profane; scholars are still often baffled by many of his sayings. For example, "pass not over a balance" could mean not being avaricious or unfair. "Poke not the fire with a sword" was a warning not to provoke someone full of anger with sharp language. "Pluck not a crown" meant do not take away the laws of a city which are its crown. "Eat not the heart" warned against afflicting oneself with sorrows. "Do not walk on the public road" meant to avoid the opinions of the crowd. The meaning of "Do not speak about Pythagorean things without light" is clear enough though.

Often someone might play the lyre while others sang, and poetry might be recited. Pythagoras discovered the mathematical relationships of the notes on the scale as well as the theorem for

right triangles named after him (although the Babylonians knew it long before). Pythagoras taught harmony in all things which meant concord in friendship and justice in politics. He and his disciples often helped to settle disputes by arbitration or mediation. Pythagoras did not believe in chance or luck but that divine providence guided all things. Thus he warned against being attached to personal wishes but instead recommended asking for the will of the gods. He taught the immortality of the soul and found nothing strange about one of his students having had a dream in which he conversed with his deceased father. Pythagoras carried on the teachings of the Orphic mysteries as well as those of the Egyptian priests. Yet more than anyone before him Pythagoras combined the spiritual teachings with the pursuit of knowledge and science.

The soul is immortal, because its source is immortal. He taught that living creatures are reproduced from one another by germination and that there is no spontaneous generation from earth. Upon returning home Pythagoras suggested asking, "Where did I trespass? What did I achieve? And what duties did I leave unfulfilled?"15 He suggested behaving so as not to make friends into enemies but to turn enemies into friends. Pythagoras may have been the first to use the term *cosmos* to imply that the entire universe has order, which he taught could be understood by mathematics. Plato credited Pythagoras with teaching a way of life, and many of Plato's ideas can be traced back to Pythagoras. The analysis of the psyche by its three components of the appetites, emotions, and the mind whose respective virtues are temperance, courage, and wisdom as well as the justice and friendship that harmonize all of them was probably first formally taught by Pythagoras.

Crotona destroyed Sybaris in 510 BC after Telys took power as king and got the Sybarites to confiscate the estates and exile five hundred of the wealthiest citizens who took refuge in Crotona. Telys sent ambassadors demanding Crotona give the exiles up or face war. According to Diodorus of Sicily, Pythagoras persuaded the Crotonians to grant safety to the suppliants, and a war ensued in which Crotona, with the help of the greatest athlete in Greece Milon and perhaps the Spartan prince Dorieus, defeated the far larger Sybarite forces, killed many, and destroyed Sybaris by flooding it with the Krathis River.

Eventually the aristocratic and esoteric ways of the Pythagoreans aroused animosity. According to Iamblichus, after Sybaris was captured, the multitudes grew resentful that the land was not divided by lot. Ninon accused the Pythagoreans of opposing democracy and led an attack against them, expelling them from Crotona. Another version is that a prominent Crotonian named Cylon was refused admission into the community, because he was violent and tyrannical. Frustrated Cylon and his followers set fire to their residence, and many Pythagoreans may have died in the fire or were killed afterward. According to Porphyry, Pythagoras escaped and fled to Metapontum, where he starved himself to death.

Xenophanes was another philosopher who left Ionia (Colophon) and lived in the west. His poetry criticized Homer and Hesiod for attributing to the gods shameful things like stealing, adultery, and deceiving each other. He satirized humans for making gods in their own images with clothes, speech, and bodies like their own. He noted that the gods of the Ethiopians were snub-nosed and black, while those of the Thracians had blue eyes and red hair. He wrote that if cattle and horses could draw their gods, they would have bodies like themselves too. Xenophanes believed there is one God, who is in no way like mortals in body or thought. This one being is always in one place

and has no need to move or go anywhere, but can do all things by the thought of its mind, seeing, thinking, and hearing all. Mortals are brought down from their high expectations, but this God uses no force nor toil; everything is accomplished through thought from its resting place. Xenophanes was skeptical that humans could ever know the truth about the gods; even if one said it, one would not know it for sure, although some beliefs do resemble the truth. Even though the gods have not revealed all from the beginning, humans by seeking can find out more in time. Xenophanes' idea of one being was taken up by the Eleatic philosopher Parmenides.

Heraclitus lived in Ephesus and was said to have given up the kingship to his brother. He found that learning many things does not necessarily teach intelligence. He refused to make laws for the Ephesians but chose instead to play games with the children at the temple of Artemis, where it was said he deposited his book. He believed that wisdom is to understand the thought that guides everything everywhere. He called conceit the falling sickness. He found that people had difficulty understanding his meaning and believed that people were as unaware awake as they were asleep.

Heraclitus also taught that all things are one. Though humans do not have true judgment, the divine does. To God everything is beautiful, good, and just; but humans suppose that some things are unjust. He claimed that he searched out himself, and he said that reality tends to hide itself. He saw war and strife and the interplay of opposites in all things. He said everything flows like a river, which is always changing, though these continual changes escape our perception. The wise is one thing having true judgment of how all things are steered through all. Heraclitus saw fire and heat as the essence of energy and life. He said the dry soul is wisest and best and warned against the moisture caused by drinking. Insolence must be extinguished more than a conflagration. He said it is hard to fight with anger, for it buys what it wants at the price of the soul. Yet the boundaries of the soul cannot be found, so deep is its measure. Heraclitus believed that trying to purify oneself through bloody sacrifices is like trying to wash in mud, and praying to a statue is like conversing with a house. The character of a person is one's spirit. Significantly at the end of the 6th century BC he believed that people must fight for the law as though for the city wall. People must rely on what is common to all, as a city depends on its laws; for all human laws are nourished by the one divine law, which always has enough power.

Notes

1. Homer, *The Iliad* tr. Richmond Lattimore, 1:121.
2. *Ibid*., 2:93.
3. *Ibid*., 5:909.
4. *Ibid*., 11:2-4.
5. *Ibid*., 16:6-10.
6. Homer, *The Odyssey* tr. Albert Cook, 1:294-296.
7. *Ibid*., 16:431-432.
8. *Ibid*., 17:483-487.
9. Hesiod, *The Great Works* tr. Hugh G. Evelyn-White, 1.
10. Burn, Andrew Robert, *The Lyric Age of Greece*, p. 164.
11. *Ibid*., p. 166.
12. Aristotle, *The Athenian Constitution* tr. Frederic G. Kenyon, 20.

13. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, tr. R. D. Hicks, 1:36.
14. *Ibid*., 1:37.
15. *Ibid*., 8:22.